

## The New York Times

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# ***Donald Trump Used Over \$250,000 From Charity for Business Disputes, Report Says***

By **Steve Eder**

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Donald J. Trump, already under scrutiny for how he uses his foundation, directed more than a quarter of a million dollars from the charity to settle legal disputes stemming from his personal businesses, according to a report on Tuesday in The Washington Post.

The payments from Mr. Trump's charity, the Donald J. Trump Foundation, helped settle unpaid fines by the town of Palm Beach, Fla., and a lawsuit over a hole in one at a tournament at a Trump golf course, The Post said.

The New York attorney general, Eric T. Schneiderman, who regulates charities in the state, said last week that he was looking into the foundation to see whether it was in compliance with state laws. His office declined to comment on Tuesday about whether it would look into the donations tied to Mr. Trump's business disputes.

A group of congressional Democrats has also asked the Department of Justice to look into a \$25,000 political donation made through the foundation in support of Florida's attorney general, Pam Bondi, around the time her office was reviewing allegations against Mr. Trump's for-profit education programs. Ms. Bondi ultimately decided not to take action against Mr. Trump.

Aides to Mr. Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, have said that donation was made in error from the foundation.

Jason Miller, a spokesman for the Trump campaign, discounted the latest revelations, saying in a statement that foundation transactions had been publicly disclosed. "There was not, and could not be, any intent or motive for the Trump Foundation to make improper payments," he said.

Legal experts said the foundation's donations in connection with litigation involving Mr. Trump's personal businesses may have violated tax regulations that prohibit using nonprofit charities for private interests.

"That's way across the line," said Lloyd Mayer, a professor at Notre Dame Law School who specializes in nonprofit and tax law. "It's not even close. It's clearly self-dealing for a private foundation like the Trump Foundation."

Mr. Mayer said he was surprised about the amount of money involved in the Trump expenditures. "I haven't seen numbers this large before," he said.

In one instance reported by The Post, the foundation made a \$158,000 donation to settle a lawsuit by a golfer who was denied a promised \$1 million payout for getting a hole in one at a charity golf tournament at a Trump course in Westchester County, N.Y.

The organization that put on the event, Alonzo Mourning Charities, had bought an insurance policy to cover any holes in one, but the insurer refused to pay the prize after determining that the golfer's tee shot was a few yards shorter than the 150 yards required by the policy.

As part of the settlement, both Mr. Trump's club and Alonzo Mourning Charities had to donate money to a charity of the golfer's choosing. The club's donation, according to tax records, came from the Trump Foundation.

In another case, the foundation paid \$100,000 in 2007 to Fisher House Foundation, a veterans' cause, as part of a settlement for fines racked up by Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach when it hoisted an oversize pole for an American flag.

Other unusual donations from the foundation have included \$20,000 paid to an artist to paint a portrait of Mr. Trump, and \$12,000 for an autographed helmet from the football player Tim Tebow.

A compounding factor for Mr. Trump is that he has given relatively little of his own money to the foundation; in recent years, it has relied almost exclusively on donations from others.

Mr. Trump and his campaign have deflected questions about his foundation, saying that he has donated “tens of millions of dollars” to charities, through his charity and directly from personal accounts, and that his friends have also contributed to help “worthy causes.” But Mr. Trump has refused to release his personal tax returns, which would indicate how much money he reported giving away.

On Tuesday, the campaign of Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, seized on the revelations about the mixing of foundation money with business issues.

“Once again, Trump has proven himself a fraud who believes the rules don’t apply to him,” said Christina Reynolds, a spokeswoman for Mrs. Clinton. “It’s past time for him to release his tax returns to show whether his tax issues extend to his own personal finances.”

Mr. Trump paid a \$2,500 penalty to the Internal Revenue Service for his foundation’s donation in support of Ms. Bondi. Some of the other expenditures may have occurred too long ago to be taxed and fined under the statute of limitations, said Marc Owens, a Washington lawyer who was formerly the director of the I.R.S.’s tax-exempt organizations division. But he said there could be other ways the I.R.S., or the New York attorney general, could pursue the foundation.

“I don’t recall ever seeing a pattern of self-dealing that encompasses so many different kinds of self-dealing,” he said.